Vol. 2, Issue 3 March 2024 ISSN: 2584-0142

A Study on Sensitive Personality, Compassion Fatigue & Secondary Trauma among Nurses

Pragati Sharma, Counselling Psychologist, Sikkim

pragatisharma680@gmail.com

Abstract

Nurses, as frontier workers encounter numerous situations and eventually it becomes harder to navigate them, which can lead to secondary trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue among them. This additionally contributes to a decline in psychological well-being. The study aimed to find out the relationship between highly sensitive personality, compassion fatigue, and secondary trauma among nurses. A total sample of 30 samples nurses working in Sikkim was collected. Result of the study indicates that there's a significant positive relationship between highly sensitive personality, compassion fatigue, and secondary trauma. This study helps us to acknowledge the issues faced by nurses that impacted their psychological well-being. The study unfolds the challenges. It is suggested that strategies such as flexible work schedules, peer support programs, and other self-care strategies needs to be incorporated to help nurses manage better and improve their psychological well-being.

Keywords: Sensitive Personality, Compassion Fatigue, Secondary Trauma, Nurses

Vol. 2, Issue 3 March 2024 ISSN: 2584-0142

INTRODUCTION

"Nurse: *Just another word to describe a person strong enough to tolerate everything and soft enough to understand everyone."*

Nurses perform their duties in many ways and have important roles in the healthcare system. They are also said to be the "heart of healthcare." They work long-hour shifts providing patient care and the distressed family member's comfort. Apart from this, they also play the role of mediator between patients and the doctors, which helps to bridge the gaps between the patient and the doctor. From frontlines to patient's bedside, their commitment and dedication make them the strong foundation of the patient's well-being. They are exposed to various types of traumatic accidents, and injuries daily which makes them prone to various mental as well as physical illnesses.

To understand these factors in detail, the study aimed to investigate the relationship between highly sensitive personality, compassion fatigue, and secondary trauma in nurses, mainly focusing on the emotional and psychological aspects of healthcare workers. It explores how highly sensitive nurses with deeper empathy for patients may make them more at risk of secondary trauma and compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, and an exceptionally sensitive personality are among the listed characteristics, and these are vital emotional and psychological aspects of nursing. A sample of thirty Sikkim nurses with a range of backgrounds and experiences in the nursing profession is included in the research. Understanding these connections can help tailor interventions and support systems to improve nurses' well-being in similar settings worldwide.

A study was conducted titled "Compassion Fatigue on Nursing: A Concept Analysis" by Peters (2018). Walker and Avant's methods of concept analysis were used in this study. The results

Vol. 2, Issue 3 March 2024 ISSN: 2584-0142

indicated that due to repetitive exposure to others' suffering and a high-stress environment, compassion fatigue negatively impacted nurses which additionally effected the healthcare system as well. Preventive measures like personal boundaries, and self-care measures were suggested by the researchers.

A cross sectional study was conducted on paper titled "Compassion Satisfaction, Secondary Traumatic stress, and Burnout among nurses working in trauma centers" by Lee et al. (2021). A total of 219 data were collected and the results indicated that compassion satisfaction and secondary traumatic stress significantly predicted nurse burnout with compassion satisfaction being the most influential predictor.

Secondary Trauma

According to Figley (1995), secondary trauma is defined as "natural and consequential behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other/client and the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person."

Ariapooran (2014) conducted a study on nurses. The data consisted of 173 nurses. The study was done to explore the risk of secondary traumatic stress and the role of social support and mindfulness in predicting secondary traumatic stress among nurses. The results found that 39.9% of the nurses were symptomatic and the severity of symptoms in emergency nurses was 41.5%; and in non-emergency 37.9%. Therefore, we can conclude that there was a negative correlation between mindfulness and social support with secondary traumatic stress

According to Komachi et al. (2012), a study was conducted on the nurses working in hospitals. The study aimed to explore the prevalence and factors associated with secondary traumatic

Vol. 2, Issue 3 March 2024 ISSN: 2584-0142

stress among nurses in general hospitals. A cross-sectional study was carried out, in which the rate of experiencing secondary trauma was 90.3% was found out. It is suggested that a support system for nurses needs to be developed further.

Compassion Fatigue

According to Figley (1995), compassion fatigue is an "acute phenomenon that engenders high levels of stress for caregivers and in which, symptoms parallels those of the original trauma victims (e.g., avoidance, hyper arousal, numbing, sleep disturbances)."

According to Zhan et al. (2022), a study was conducted on the nurses, which aimed to study the prevalence and associated factors for compassion fatigue among nurses in Fangcheng Shelter Hospitals in Wuhan. A descriptive, cross-sectional study was carried out using 972 participants. Furthermore, the results indicated that there was a significant relationship between compassion fatigue, work-related factors, and perceived stress among the nurses working in Fangcheng Shelter Hospitals. A good working environment, psychological consultations, and organizational support were suggested by researchers.

According to Berger et al, (2015), a study was conducted on pediatric nurses. The study aimed to determine the prevalence and severity of compassion fatigue among pediatric nurses. The results indicated that the nurses under 40 years of age with the experience of 6-10 years, in the medical-surgical unit had significantly lower compassion fatigue as compared to the nurses working with the children with severe illness or injury.

Vol. 2, Issue 3 March 2024 ISSN: 2584-0142

Sensitive Personality

Sensitive personality is defined as "a difference not in the sense organs per se but to sensitivity that occurs as sensory information is transmitted or processed in the brain" (Aron, 1997).

According to Cheng et al. (2021), a study was conducted to explore ethical sensitivity and to explore factors influencing among Chinese-registered nurses to help nursing administrators improve nurse's ethical sensitivity, build harmony between nurses and patients, and promote patient health. The study was cross-sectional and 500 samples were used from the several departments. The study indicated that the main factors influencing ethical sensitivity were gender, years of working, quality of family communication, career satisfaction, and empathic ability.

PURPOSE

The purpose is to the relationship between sensitive personality, compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary trauma among nurses.

METHOD

SAMPLE

A total sample of 30 Nurses in the age 20- 45 years of age was collected from the state of Sikkim.

MEASURES

- **Highly Sensitive Person Scale (HSPS):** The Highly Sensitive Person scale is a self-report questionnaire developed by Aron and Aron (1997). It was designed to measure

Vol. 2, Issue 3 March 2024 ISSN: 2584-0142

the degree of high sensitivity in adults. It consists of 27 items, rated on the 7-point Likert Scale. It measures the variety of aspects of high sensitivity including Sensory Processing Sensitivity, Emotional Sensitivity, Social Sensitivity, and Imagination Sensitivity.

- **Burnout, Compassion Fatigue, Vicarious Trauma Assessment:** A burnout, vicarious trauma, and compassion fatigue is a questionnaire developed by Figley (1900). It was designed to measure burnout, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma in adults. It consists of 21 items, each of which is on a 7-point Likert scale.

PROCEDURE: Google form

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

RESULTS

TABLE 1

N, Mean and Standard Deviation

	Highly Sensitive Personality	Burnout	Compassion Fatigue	Vicarious Trauma
N	30	29	29	29
Mean	174	184	378	740
Standard Deviation	62.5	53.4	117	217

Vol. 2, Issue 3 March 2024 ISSN: 2584-0142

TABLE 2

Correlation between sensitive personality, compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary trauma among nurses

	Highly Sensitive Personality	Compassion Fatigue	Burnout	Vicarious Trauma
Highly Sensitive Personality	—			
Compassion Fatigue	0.947 ***	—		
Burnout	0.997 ***	0.944 ***	—	
Vicarious Trauma	0.991 ***	0.959 ***	0.991 ***	—

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The research aimed to measure relationship between highly sensitive personality, secondary trauma, and compassion fatigue among nurses. The data consisted of 30 Nurses in the age 20 to 45 years of age. Data was collected through online mode. The results were examined in connection to support of the theory. For the study, a correlation coefficient was used to test the hypothesis. The study impediments, suggestions, and potential future thoughts are too investigated. Highly sensitive personality and Compassion Fatigue: The correlation coefficient between highly sensitive personality and compassion fatigue is 0.047, which suggests that there

Vol. 2, Issue 3 March 2024 ISSN: 2584-0142

is a positive relationship between sensitive personality and compassion fatigue. This implies that highly sensitive individuals are moreover likely to encounter compassion fatigue.

Following are the findings,

Highly sensitive personality and Burnout: The significant positive correlation coefficient between highly sensitive personality and Burnout is (r= 0.097, p <.001), which suggests that there is a positive relationship between sensitive personality and Burnout. This implies that highly sensitive individuals are moreover likely to encounter burnout.

Highly Sensitive personality and vicarious trauma: The significant positive correlation coefficient between highly sensitive personality and vicarious trauma is (r= 0.991, p <.001), which indicates that there is a positive relationship between the variables. This implies that highly sensitive individuals are moreover likely to encounter vicarious trauma.

Burnout and compassion fatigue: The correlation coefficient between Burnout and Fatigue is (r= 0.944, p <.001), which suggests that there is also a significant relationship between Burnout and Fatigue. This implies that individuals who are prone to burnout are more likely to have compassion fatigue.

Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma: The significant positive correlation coefficient between Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious trauma is (r= 0.959, p <.01) which suggests that there is a significant relationship between compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma.

According to the table, the hypothesis was supported as there was a significant relationship between the connected variables. The significant positive relationship between the variables

Vol. 2, Issue 3 March 2024 ISSN: 2584-0142

recommended that there is a common inclination for individuals who score high on one variable to moreover score high on the others. One conceivable clarification for this can be that all the variables are related to highly sensitive personalities.

The present results are consistent with Barmawi et al. (2019) that investigated coping strategies as moderating factors to compassion fatigue among critical care nurses in Jordanian Hospital. Additionally, the study also explored the levels of compassion fatigue, burnout, and satisfaction among critical care and emergency nurse. A cross-sectional design was used for the nurses working in different types of critical care units and emergency departments. The results indicate compassion fatigue and coping strategies as moderate factors among critical care nurses in Jordan.

O'Mahony et al. (2017), conducted a study on compassion fatigue among palliative care clinicians. Sixty -six medicine, physicians, nurses, and social workers participated. The objective was to study whether the personality traits of neuroticism and agreeableness relate to aspects of compassion fatigue, after working in the field. The results indicated that Neuroticism demonstrates strong significance with secondary traumatic stress and burnout whereas Agreeableness was significantly and strongly associated with compassion satisfaction. Furthermore, personality traits may convey risk and resilience respectively.

CONCLUSION

The present research aimed to study relationship between highly sensitive personality, compassion fatigue, and secondary trauma among nurses. The data was collected by online mode using Google Forms. Therefore, the findings revealed that there is a strong significance among the variables i.e. highly sensitive personality, compassion fatigue and secondary trauma.

Vol. 2, Issue 3 March 2024 ISSN: 2584-0142

The obtained results are consistent with existing research such as O'Mahony et al. (2017) on compassion fatigue among palliative care clinicians and by Barmawi et al. (2019) study.

Although, there are much evidence to back the above research, but it is appropriate to recognize several potential limitations. One limitation of this study is that the study was conducted on a relatively small sample size of nurses. This means that the results may not be generalizable to other populations. Secondly, convenience sampling was adopted for the participant recruitment which could also lead to self-selection bias. In terms of future research, it would be useful to extend the current findings by increasing the sample size for more generalizable results. Also controlling the factors and variables that could have influenced the results.

Vol. 2, Issue 3 March 2024 ISSN: 2584-0142

REFERENCE

Al Barmawi MA, Subih M, Salameh O, Sayyah Yousef Sayyah N, Shoqirat N, Abdel-Azeez Eid Abu Jebbeh R. Coping strategies as moderating factors to compassion fatigue among critical care nurses. *Brain Behav*. 2019; 9:e01264. https://doi.org/10.1002/brb3.1264

Ariapooran S. (2014). Compassion fatigue and burnout in Iranian nurses: The role of perceived social support. *Iranian journal of nursing and midwifery research*, *19*(3), 279–284.

Berger, J., Polivka, B. J., Smoot, E. A., & Owens, H. (2015). Compassion fatigue in pediatric nurses. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, *30*(6), e11–e17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedn.2015.02.005

Figley, C. R. (1995). Compassion fatigue: Toward a new understanding of the costs of caring.

Lee, H.J., Lee, M., &Jang,S.J.(2021).Compassion Satisfaction, Secondary Traumatic Stress, and Burnout among Nurses Working in Trauma Centers: A Cross-sectional Study. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health,18(14),7228.https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18147228

Montoya-Pérez, K. S., Ortega, J. I. M., Montes-Delgado, R., Padrós-Blázquez, F., de la Roca Chiapas, J. M., & Montoya-Pérez, R. (2019). Psychometric Properties Of The Highly Sensitive Person Scale In the Mexican Population. *Psychology research and behavior management*, *12*, 1081–1086. https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S224808

Rauvola, R. S., Vega, D. M., & Lavigne, K. N. (2019). Compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, and vicarious traumatization: A qualitative review and research agenda. *Occupational Health Science*, *3*, 297-336.

Shanafelt, T. D., Boone, S., Tan, L., Dyrbye, L. N., Sotile, W., Satele, D., ... & Oreskovich, M. R. (2012). Burnout and satisfaction with work-life balance among US physicians

Vol. 2, Issue 3 March 2024 ISSN: 2584-0142

relative to the general US population. *Archives of internal medicine*, *172*(18), 1377-1385.

Vickie's Favorite Quote: (13 C.E., May 13). *legal nurse.com*. Retrieved May 13, 2016, from https://www.legalnurse.com/legal-nurse-consulting-blog/2016/05/vickies-favorite-quotes-nurse-is-just-another-word-to-describe-a-person-strong-enough-to-tolerate-everything-and-soft-enough-to-understand-everyone#:~:text=13May2016-,Vickie's%20Favorite%20Quote%3A%20NURSE%2C%20Is%20Just%20Another%20Word%20to%20Describe, Soft%20Enough%20to%20Understand%20Everyone

Zhan, Y., Liu, Y., Chen, Y., Liu, H., Zhang, W., Yan, R., Yu, J., & Li, S. (2022). The prevalence and influencing factors for compassion fatigue among nurses in Fangcang shelter hospitals: A cross-sectional study. *International Journal of Nursing Practice*, *28*(5). https://doi.org/10.1111/ijn.13054